



King County

Metropolitan King County Council

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April 16, 2012

The Honorable Mike McGinn
Mayor, City of Seattle
PO Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

Dear Mayor McGinn,

As the Chair and Vice Chair of the King County Council's Transportation, Economy and Environment (TrEE) Committee, we followed with a great deal of interest the recent discussions regarding the transportation challenges in SoDo and the potential adverse impact an NBA/NHL arena could have on one of our major economic engines – the Port of Seattle.

We were heartened when Mr. Chris Hansen agreed to fund an Arena Traffic Study to seek answers to the many questions that the arena project raises. While Mr. Hansen is funding the study, it is our hope that it will be comprehensive, independent and take an unbiased view of the transportation challenges in the SoDo corridor.

There are a number of questions we would like to have answered before the King County Council takes any action on the proposed arena. We would appreciate your assistance in ensuring that the following areas are addressed:

1. Mr. Hansen has repeatedly referred in the press to studies his team conducted before selecting SoDo as the site for the arena. It would be most helpful if he would share more detail about the studies, when they were performed, who conducted them and what other sites were considered.
2. Other economic interests in SoDo, including the Port of Seattle, the Manufacturing and Industrial Council, the Burlington Northern Railway and the Seattle Mariners have expressed concern that additional traffic will have an adverse impact on their organizations. It would be helpful if the study could attempt to quantify what impacts, if any, will be felt by these entities and what is an acceptable impact on these interests.

3. Mr. Hansen has proposed an arena capable of hosting the NBA and NHL at a cost of \$490 million. Does that cost estimate include money for traffic mitigation or parking facilities and if so, how much?
4. If traffic mitigation needs to be undertaken, is that an expense that Mr. Hansen would incur, would improvements be paid for by the City of Seattle, or would both the City and King County be expected to pay for traffic mitigation?
5. Has Mr. Hansen had any discussions with the Washington Department of Transportation in an attempt to learn how traffic patterns may change as a result of the deep bore tunnel that will replace the viaduct? Has there been any analysis of how viaduct construction and stadium construction might cumulatively affect traffic in SoDo?
6. The challenge of moving freight through the corridor as well as accommodating sports fans is not a new issue. In 2002 an overpass was proposed for South Lander Street; however, money for that project was reprioritized to fund the Mercer project. What is the revised cost estimate for the completion of the South Lander project today and what kind of relief would that provide to the existing businesses of SoDo? Are there other projects that have been identified that would provide additional relief?
7. The advent of tolls on the SR 520 bridge has placed additional traffic pressure on the I-90 route across Lake Washington. We have yet to see how this additional traffic on I-90 will impact a regular season Mariners game. What impact will the arena have on I-90 traffic congestion? In particular, how likely is traffic on I-90 to back up beyond the I-5 intersection, impeding traffic that is not destined for the SoDo sports destinations? The Sonics had 60% of their season ticket holders from east of Lake Washington. If that same percentage holds true, what will that mean for additional I-90 traffic?
8. The site that has been selected is not particularly well served by transit. In addition, pedestrian access in the area faces a number of impediments including inadequate sidewalks and the need to traverse railroad tracks. What transit improvements are necessary? What pedestrian improvements would be needed? How would these be paid for given current restrictions on transit revenues?
9. Has Mr. Hansen forecast what percentage of people using the new arena will drive to the location vs. what percentage will rely on public transportation? How do these figures compare with the real life experience of the Mariners and the Seahawks?
10. Public transit is already operating near capacity. If Mr. Hansen believes that a significant percentage of arena goers are going to be utilizing public transit, how does he expect transit to provide additional capacity on event days? Is he willing to pay to add additional service?

11. How many days per year do plans call for using the arena? How many of those dates are the NHL or NBA vs. concerts or other events? What is the minimum number of outside events necessary to make the arena break even?
12. One of the concerns expressed is overlapping events with either Safeco Field or CenturyLink Field? It would be valuable to see a model of what traffic flow might look like when more than one event is being held. Is Mr. Hansen prepared to accept restrictions on overlapping events?
13. In considering traffic impacts, it would be valuable to look beyond the immediate SoDo area. Major events in SoDo impact traffic in Downtown Seattle and even access to and from West Seattle. How are these communities likely to be impacted by placing the arena in SoDo?
14. If the arena plan calls for Occidental to be closed between Massachusetts and Holgate, how would the plan propose modifying access to the Safeco Field garage?
15. It is important that all traffic studies consider the maximum total capacity of facilities and not just average attendance in recent years, since attendance varies widely based on team performance.
16. The City of Seattle currently has restrictions regarding dual events at Safeco and CenturyLink. Is it correct to assume that the new arena would face similar restrictions, including the requirement of more than three hours of separation between events?
17. In selecting the SoDo site for the arena, did Mr. Hansen consider likely future utilization changes at the Port of Seattle or does he assume that operations will continue at current levels?

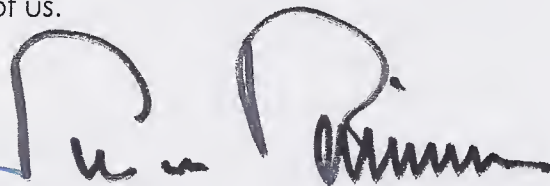
These are just some of the questions and issues that come to mind that we hope a complete and thorough transportation study will address. The area of SoDo is in such a state of change right now with more utilization of I-90, the demise of the viaduct and the activity at the Port of Seattle. Any study must not only look at the past; it must also project the impact of all this change.

We will look forward to hearing from you and working constructively on this arena project once we have all the facts in front of us.

Sincerely,



Larry Phillips, Councilmember
King County Council, District 4
Chair, TrEE Committee



Pete von Reichbauer, Councilmember
King County Council, District 7
Vice Chair, TrEE Committee